



AMERICAN CENTER NEWSLETTER

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American Center

Colombo

March 2012

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American Center Hosts 'Open Mic Competitive Poetry Slam – Season 4'



Performers at the Poetry Slam competition with Outreach Officer Hector Gonzalez

On March 22nd, the 'Open Mic Competitive Poetry Slam – Season 4' was hosted by the American Center Colombo. Eleven poets recited their poems to the audiences in their own style. The poets' friends and family members, as well as college and school students were among the audience. Four judges were selected from the audience and asked to give scores to each performance.

The 'best performer' was awarded with certificate and a winning prize. An 'audience choice award' was also given with a certificate and a prize as well. All performers received an IIP publication and free life time membership to IRC Colombo and American Corners in Kandy and Jaffna.

Upcoming & Current Events

April 26, 3:30 pm

Public lecture on "Human Animal Conflict in Sri Lanka" by Mr. Pubudu Weeraratna at the American Center in Colombo.

April 28, 2:30 pm

Storytelling program at the American Center in Colombo. The Wonderful Wizard of Oz (story) will be read by Robert Durham. DVD The Wizard of Oz will be screened at 3.30 p.m.

*Wish You All
A Very Happy
Sinhala & Tamil
New Year!*



American Center

Colombo

American Center Library will be closed
on April 12, 13 and 14 for
Sinhala & Tamil New Year holidays

U.S. Embassy Participates in 'Ananda Abhiman' Exhibition



Cultural Affairs Officer Niambi Young with students visited the booth

On March 26th, U.S. Embassy Colombo participated in an exhibition by Ananda College in Colombo to celebrate Ananda's 125th year anniversary. The Embassy booth featured posters on education, U.S. culture & sports and also Embassy activities in Sri

Lanka. Cultural Affairs Officer of the Embassy Niambi Young interacted with students and conducted a quiz competition on the USA. Ananda College was founded by a renowned American, Colonel Henry Steel Olcott, back in 1886.



Students registering for Quiz Competition

Panel discussion on 'Disability Rights'



Panelists: L to R: Dr. Padmani Mendis (Moderator), Dr. Shehan Williams, Mr. Anver Dole, Mr. R.S. Medagama, Dr. Ajith C.S. Perera

On March 28, 2012, the American Center, in collaboration with US-SL Fulbright Commission, hosted the second program on Disability & Ability with a panel discussion on 'Disability Rights' covering accessibility to built environments, inclusive education and employment, mental health issues, and new legislation.

The program was held at the US-SL Fulbright auditorium and was attended by sixty participants. Participants included activists, NGOs, teachers, parents, medical staff, government officials, and the private sector. The welcome message was by the Deputy Director of US-SL Fulbright Commission Ramya Jirasinghe. Opening remarks by U.S.

Embassy Colombo's Public Affairs Officer Christopher Teal informed the audience of the Americans with Disabilities Act and encouraged them to visit the ADA homepage (www.ada.gov) for more information. The panel of speakers comprised of Dr. Ajith C.S. Perera, accessibility activist and advisor; Mr. R.S. Medagama, Consultant on School Health Promotion in a project under the London-based Partnership for Child Development of Imperial College, and the World Bank; Mr. Anver Dole, Chairman of Employer Network on Disability; and Dr. Shehan Williams, Psychiatrist and Head of the Department of Psychiatry of the University of Kelaniya. Each of the panelists presented on their respective topics followed by an open forum.



A participant raising a question on employment opportunities for persons with disability

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Disability program on Autism & film-show 'Temple Grandin'



Christopher Teal, Director of the American Center giving the opening remarks

On March 21, 2012, the American Center, in collaboration with US-SL Fulbright Commission, hosted the first program on Disability & Ability with a panel discussion on 'Autism.'

The program was held at the US-SL Fulbright auditorium and was attended by ninety participants.

Participants included activists, NGOs, teachers, parents, medical staff, government officials, the private sector and the media. The welcome message was by the Deputy Director of US-SL Fulbright, Ramya Jirasinghe and the opening remarks by U.S. Embassy Colombo's Public Affairs Officer, Christopher Teal.

The panel of speakers comprised of Professor Hemamali Perera, Department of Psychological Medicine at the University of Colombo who presented 'Treating Autism;' Professor Amala De Silva, Economics Department, University of

Colombo shared her experience as a parent; Victoria Liyanage, teacher-trainer and educator of children with Autism presented 'Teaching Methods;' and Ianthe Perera, Speech and Language Therapist at the Department of Disability Studies of the Faculty of Medicine at the University of Kelaniya, presented 'Social Communication.' During the Q&A session, a request was made to take this program beyond Colombo to other parts of the country as parents and teachers would greatly benefit from such programs.



Section of the audience who attended the disability program on 'Autism'

The program concluded with the screening of film 'Temple Grandin.'

Embassy outreach event at Zahira College



ECON Officer Christopher Corkey presenting a set of IIP Publications to the Principal

On April 03, 2012, as part of ongoing Muslim outreach efforts and the Embassy's speaker program, the American Center organized a talk on 'Protecting the Earth,' commemorating Earth Day. Economic Officer Christopher Corkey of U.S. Embassy Colombo spoke. The talk was hosted at Colombo's Zahira College. Students and teachers attended the talk and had a lively discussion at the end with Mr. Corkey. Student leaders delivered the opening remarks and closing remarks at the presentation. Mr. Corkey presented a set of publications to the principal for the school's library collection.

Panel discussion on 'Disability Rights'

The vibrant and interactive open forum was moderated by Dr. Padmani Mendis, advisor on disability issues with questions raised on the functioning of special education units, employment

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opportunities for the disabled, the need for media coverage on disability issues, and promoting of new legislation for mental health by the public.

American Center Celebrates International Women's Day



Ms. Rocky Ariyaratne delivering her presentation

March 8, 2012: To commemorate Women's History Month, IRC Colombo organized its monthly Public Lecture on "A World Free of Violence Against

Women". Well-known activist and attorney Rocky Ariyaratne delivered the presentation. Ambassador Patricia Butenis made the opening remarks, and Public Affairs Officer Christopher Teal made the welcome address. The lecture was attended by school children and NGO activists who deal with women issues in Sri Lanka and was linked with the American Corners in Kandy and Jaffna through a Digital Video Conference (DVC). The participants had an opportunity to hear a very informative speech with some examples and evidences of violence had occurred in the country.

The overall comments from the participants were good and they expressed interest in attending such programs in the future. They all admired the high intellectual quality of her talk.

IRC Colombo Promotes Reading Culture Among Young Children in Sri Lanka

With the main objective of developing a taste for reading in young adults and strengthening their reading skills, the American Center Library has been conducting a monthly reading club named "Readers Are Leaders" since January 2010. Several American Officers attached to the U. S. Embassy Colombo, their family members, and those who have enthusiasm, read to children at the reading clubs. The February 2012 reading club was held on March 24 at the American Center Colombo.

"The Apple Dumpling Gang" was read by Pamela Ferdinand, a Sri Lankan American, to children



between 11-15 years old. The film version was screened afterwards. Younger children had the opportunity to hear a story from Florida Reading by Robyn Levy who serves as an intern at the Asia Foundation in Sri Lanka. The children were invited to share their reading experiences during the reading hour.

American Center Commemorates World Water Day



Speaker James Clarke presenting his presentation

On April 05, 2012, the American Center hosted a public lecture, 'The Last Drop? Myth and Reality in Water Management,' commemorating World Water

Day. The presenter was James Clarke, head of communications at the International Water Management Institute, headquartered in Colombo. He gave an overview on the global and local scenario and discussed effective ways of managing to improve water productivity on farms, grow new crops, promote trade from highly productive to less productive regions and also manage demand by reducing consumption and wastage.

Public Affairs Officer, Christopher Teal welcomed the audience and introduced the speaker. The audience had a lively discussion with the speaker on issues affecting Sri Lanka's water resources especially in the Northern Peninsula and globally as a whole.

U.S. Embassy Partners with Local Businesses on Biz+ Program



USAID Senior Deputy Assistant Administrator for Asia Denise Rollins and USAID Mission Director in Colombo Jim Bednar tour Jeyantha's Katcovalam Ice Factory.

The United States Agency for International Development (USAID), the development arm of the U.S. Embassy, awarded the first grant under its Biz+ program on Friday. This \$275,000 grant will help Jeyantha's Katcovalam Ice Factory expand its ice production from six to 26 tons per day, meeting growing demand from fishermen and traders who transport fresh fish to Colombo and elsewhere.

The Biz+ program supports local businesses, increasing economic growth and job creation in recovering areas. The program provides grants along with technical and managerial assistance to small- and medium-size businesses.

USAID Partners with Sri Lanka to Address Sexual Crimes

The United States Agency for International Development (USAID), in partnership with the Ministry of Health and Ministry of Justice, launched its Sexual Assault Forensic Examination (SAFE) program with a roundtable discussion in Colombo on Monday March 12. The SAFE program aims to increase prosecution of sexual crimes through improved response to victims, better evidence collection and stronger coordination with local authorities. It will help decrease incidence of sexual assault and abuse through successful prosecution of offenders.

Through USAID, the development arm of the U.S. Embassy in Colombo, the SAFE program provides

The grant will fund the purchase and installation of environmentally-friendly refrigeration units at a new central facility, and will support localized cooling and ice distribution centers. Biz+ will also provide technical assistance to improve the design of the company's operations, to help cut costs of wasted cold water.

"USAID's latest initiative, Biz+, will open up jobs after decades of conflict. This grant will augment incomes of fishermen and fish traders by meeting the demand for ice in the region and benefit others along the value chain, such as transporters," said USAID Mission Director Jim Bednar. "This is the ultimate aim of Biz+: to help improve living standards of vulnerable populations and stimulate the region's economic growth".

The grant was signed by USAID's visiting Senior Deputy Assistant Administrator for the Asia Bureau, Denise Rollins. The grant award came as part of Denise Rollins's three-day visit to the island to review progress of USAID-supported activities.

The American people, through the U.S. Agency for International Development, have provided development and humanitarian assistance in developing countries worldwide for nearly 50 years. Since 1956, the U.S. government has invested over \$2 billion to benefit all the people of Sri Lanka.

evidence collection kits and specialized professional training on collecting forensic evidence from sexual assault victims. It also supports university forensic departments and provides grants to partner organizations and communities with a focus on the North and East of Sri Lanka.

More than 50 experts from across Sri Lanka, specializing in forensics, law, medicine, curriculum development and advocacy, attended the forum. It included presentations from five of the country's leading experts on forensics, law, and medical training. The program is implemented in partnership with the Ministry of Health and the University Grants Commission and in coordination with the Ministry of Justice through the Attorney General's Department.

Monthly Essay Competition



Learn about America



information on the United States, its culture, history, literature, politics, tourist attractions and much more.

The first three winners in each age group will be given a selection of American books, a lifetime membership to the American Center Library, and a certificate signed by the U.S. Ambassador. A prize giving ceremony will be held at the American Center Colombo every two months.

Essay Competition for School Children on the theme of Learn About America

The American Center has organized an essay competition for school children which is published in Junior Observer of the Sunday Observer.

The monthly essay topic is for children in three age categories 12-14 years, 15-16 years and 17-18 years.

Each age group is given a monthly topic related to the United States of America and is asked to write an essay with a minimum word count. The students can conduct research for their essay at the American Center Library in Colombo, at American Corner in Kandy and Jaffna, or from sources on IIP Digital, a very good internet resource with

Essay topics for March/April are as follows:

Commemorating Women's History Month

12-14 years: Contributions of Women in Development of a Country (500 words)

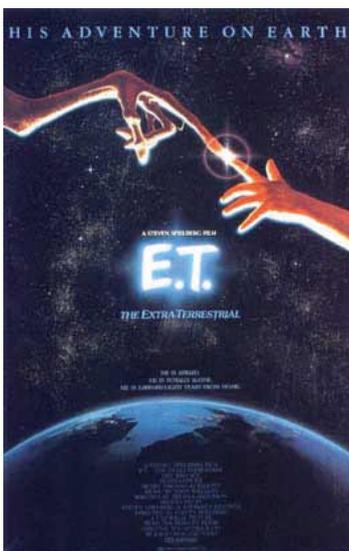
15-16 years: Women's Education - Women's Empowerment (750 words)

17-18 years: The role of the society in making a world free of violence against women (1000 words)

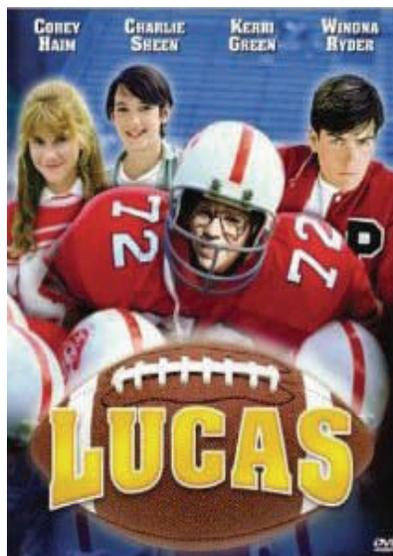
Please see the Junior Observer of the Sunday Observer for more details.

Movies for Youth at the American Center

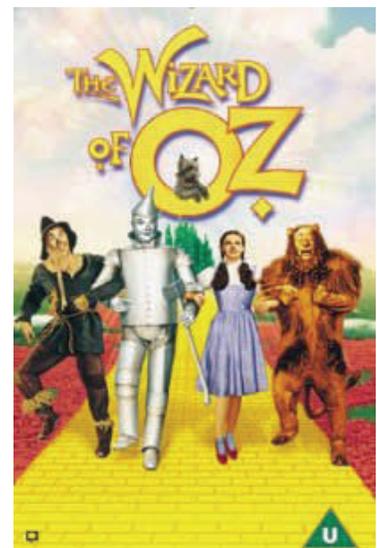
April 7
3:30 pm
E.T.



April 21
3:30 pm
LUCAS



April 28
3:30 pm
THE WIZARD OF OZ



Film Screenings at the American Center

April 2012

April 10 - Raising Arizona (1987, 94 minutes)

Vowing to go straight, a convenience store banditt (Nicolas Cage) proposes marriage to the police departments photographer (Holly Hunter). All is wedded bliss until they discover she's unable to get pregnant and are turned down by every adoption agency in town. It does not take long before they realize the only solution is to kidnap one of the town's celebrated quintuplets and hit the road!

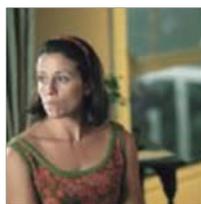
April 17 - Almost Famous (2000, 122 minutes)

Audiences and critics alike are raving about this larger-than-life rock'n 'roll favorite that Roger Ebert calls "one of the best movies of the year!" The guys of Stillwater have the sound, they have the look and Rolling Stone Magazine wants their story. For young reporter William Miller, it's the opportunity of a lifetime as he hits the road with his favorite band and discovers the price of fame, the value of family and the limits of friendship.

April 24 - American Graffiti (1973, 110 minutes)

George Lucas' paean to early '60s youth culture boasts a cast of future stars that includes Ron Howard, Richard Dreyfuss, Cindy Williams, Paul Le Mat, Charles Martin Smith, Mackenzie Phillips, and Harrison Ford. Follow the lives, loves, and misadventures of a group of friends one summer night in '62, in Modesto, Ca., as they prepare for the uncertainty of life after high school. Look for Suzanne Somers, Kay Lenz, and Kathleen Quinlan. Features a definitive early rock 'n' roll soundtrack.

Movies start promptly at 6:00pm every Tuesday. Seating is limited and is first-come, first-served. Please contact the American Center at amcentersl@state.gov or at (11) 249-8146 with any questions. Entrance free !



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March 2012

Their lawless years are behind them.
Their child-rearing years lay ahead...



RAISING ARIZONA
A comedy beyond belief.

